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A FOURTH
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MIRACLES
OF OUR
SAVIOUR,

In VIEW of the Present
Controversy between INFIDELS
and APOSTATES.

*Canes qui oblatrant contra Inquisitionem
Veritatis.* Clem. Alex.

The Second Edition.

By THOMAS WOOLSTON, sometime
Fellow of *Sidney-College* in *Cambridge*.

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A HISTORY OF

DISCOVERIES

IN THE

ARTS

OF THE PRESENT
AGE

AND THE
FUTURE

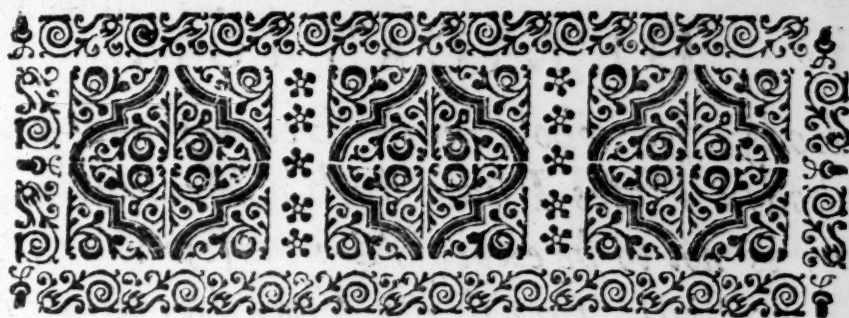
OF THE

ARTS

OF THE

ARTS

By the
Author of
"The History of the
Arts of the
Present Age"



T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in God

F R A N C I S,

Lord Bishop of St. ASAPH.

M Y L O R D,



If the Convocation had been sitting, I would have made this Dedication to them, and humbly implored of them, what for their Love to the Fathers, they would readily have granted, a Recommendation of these my Discourses on Miracles to the Clergy: But being unhappily disappointed of a Session of that Reverend and Learned
A 2 *Body,*

IV DEDICATION.

Body, for whose wise Debates and orthodox Votes I have such a Veneration, as is not to be express'd in a few Words, I presently turn'd my Thoughts on your Lordship, to whom a Dedication is due, because of your Respect, often declared, for the Authority of the Fathers, which induces me to think, you now approve of the Use I have made of them.

But what I am here to applaud your Lordship for, is, your Discourse call'd Difficulties and Discouragements, &c. That admirable Satire against modern Orthodoxy and Persecution! How was I tickled in the Perusal of it! It is plainly the Sense of your Soul, or you had set your Name to it: And if the Temptation of Praise for it, had not been too great to be resisted, I could have wish'd you had always conceal'd your self; and then you had not written against the Grain, an aukward Piece on Church Power, like a Retraction, to reingratiate your self with some Ecclesiastical Noodles, whom you no more, than I, need to care for.

DEDICATION. V

I have sometimes wondered, My Lord, where and when the Great Mr. Grounds imbibed his notable Notions about Religion and Liberty; for he suck'd them not in with his Mothers Milk, who, I suppose, train'd him up in the Belief of Christianity: But when I consider'd, that he was once the Pupil of Mr. Hare at Cambridge, my wonder ceas'd. Under your Lordship's Tuition, it seems he laid the Foundation of his distinguish'd Learning and Opinions! His Pupillage will be your immortal Honour! I wonder, none of the Writers against him have as yet celebrated your Praise for it! How does he imitate and resemble his Tutor in Principles! I can't say, he surpasses you, since there is such a Freedom of Thought and Expression in your Difficulties, &c. so strongly favouring of Infid-ty, that he has not as yet equall'd.

Upon your Lordship's Advancement to a Bishoprick, Difficultys and Discouragements notwithstanding, I wish'd, without prescribing to the Wisdom

vi DEDICATION.

dom of the Government in the choice of a learned Prelate, that the great Mr. Grounds, for the good of the Church too, might be soon consecrated: And I should not have despair'd of it, but that he is a Gentleman of real Probity and Conscience, and might possibly boggle at Subscriptions, unless you and Bishop Hoadly could help him to some of your Reserves and Distinctions, wherewith you must be both well Stock'd, to overcome that Difficulty. And why should not Dean Swift for his Writings, as well as some others, be made a Bishop? I should like to see him one; if the then Right Reverend Bishop Grounds would not think him, for his Tale of a Tub, too loose in the Faith, for his Company.

Don't imagine, My Lord, that I am forming of Schemes for my self to be a Bishop. Tho these my Discourses on Miracles are of very great Merit, as well as your Lordship's Difficulties, &c. yet you may be assured, I have no such View, when I tell you, that the Honour,

DEDICATION. vii

Honour, the Fathers have exalted me to, of a Moderator in this Controversy, sets me above all Ecclesiastical Preference excepting the Arch-Bishoprick of Canterbury, which I'm afraid will we void, before the King is apprised of my singular Worth and Qualifications for it.

*But however, if such excellent Prelates, as Grounds, Hoadly, Swift, Hare and my self were at the Head of Ecclesiastical Affairs, what would we do? What should we not do? What would not this free-thinking Age expect from us? Nothing less, than that, according to our Principles, we should endeavour to set Mankind at perfect Liberty, and to lay open the dirty Fences of the Church, call'd Subscriptions, which are not only the Stain of a good Conscience, but the Discouragements, your Lordship hints at, in the Study of the Scriptures: And if we made a Push for an Act of P——t to turn the Clergy to Grass, after King Henry VIIIth's Monks and Fryars; where
would*

viii DEDIGATION.

would be the Harm of it? Nay, the Advantage to the Publick, as well as to Religion, would be great, if their Revenues were apply'd to the Payment of National Debts; with a Reserve to our selves (remember, My Lord) of large Emoluments out of them, according to our great Merits; otherwise worldly-wise Men will repute us impolitick Fools, which you and Bishop Hoadly, I humbly presume, will never endure the Reproach of.

So, hoping your Lordship will accept of this Dedication to your Praise, in as much Sincerity as it is written, I subscribe myself,

My LORD,

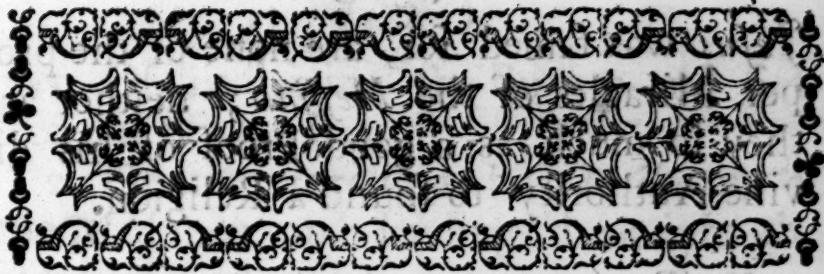
London, May,
14. 1728.

The Admirer of your

Difficultys and

Discouragements,

Tho. Woolston.



A FOURTH
DISCOURSE
ON THE
MIRACLES
OF OUR
SAVIOUR, &c.



OW for a fourth Discourse on *Jesus's* Miracles, which, as before, I begin with a Repitition of the three general Heads, at first proposed to be treated on ; and they are,

I. To show, that the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which

B

Jesus

Jesus was famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the *Messiah*; neither are they so much as a good Proof of his divine Authority to found a Religion.

II. To prove that the literal History of many of the Miracles of *Jesus*, as recorded by the *Evangelists*, does imply Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities; consequently they, either in the whole or in part, were never wrought, as it is commonly believed now-a-days, but are only related as prophetical and parabolical Narratives, of what would be mysteriously, and more wonderfully done by him.

III. To consider what *Jesus* means, when he appeals to his Miracles, as to a Testimony and Witness of his divine Power; and to show that he could not properly and ultimately refer to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to the mystical ones, he would do in the *Spirit*; of which those wrought in the *Flesh* are but mere Types and Shadows.

I am upon the second of these Heads, and according to it, have, in my former *Discourses*, taken into examination eight of the Miracles of *Jesus*, viz. those:

I. Of

1. Of his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple.

2. Of his exorcising the *Devils* out of the Mad-men, and sending them into the Herd of Swine.

3. Of his Transfiguration on the Mount.

4. Of his healing a Woman, that had an Issue of Blood, twelve Years.

5. Of his curing a Woman, that had a Spirit of Infirmary, eighteen Years.

6. Of his telling the *Samaritan* Woman, her fortune of having had five Husbands, and being then an Adulteress with another Man.

7. Of his cursing the Figtree for not bearing Fruit out of season. And,

8. Of his healing a Man of an Infirmary at the Pool of *Bethesda*.

Whether it be not manifest, that the Literal and Evangelical Story of these Miracles, from what I have argu'd and reason'd upon them, does not consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, according to the Proposition before us, let my Readers judge; and so I come to the Consideration of

9. A ninth Miracle of *Jesus*, viz. that (1) of his giving sight to a Man who was

(1) John ix.

born blind, by the means of Eye-salve, made of Dirt and Spittle.

Blindness, as far as one may guess by the Evangelical History, was the Distemper that *Jesus* frequently exercis'd his Power on: And there is no doubt to be made, but he heal'd many of one Weakness, Defect and Imperfection, or other in their Eyes; but whether he wrought any Miracle upon any, he is suppos'd to have cured, is uncertain. There are, as it's notorious, many kinds of Blindness, that are incurable by Art or Nature; and there are other kinds of it, that Nature and Art will relieve a Man in. But whether *Jesus* used his healing Power against the former, as well as the latter sort of Blindness, is more than can be affirm'd, or at least proved by our *Divines*. And unless we knew of a certainty, that the sore or blind Eyes, *Jesus* cured, were absolutely out of the reach of Art and Nature; *Infidels* will imagine, and suggest, that he was only Master of a good Ointment for sore Eyes, and being successful in the use of it, ignorant People would needs think, he wrought Miracles.

The World is often bless'd with excellent *Oculists*, who thro' Study and Practice have attain'd to wonderful Skill in Eye-Maladies, which tho they are of various

rious sorts, yet, by Custom of Speech, all pass under the general Name of *Blindness*. And sometimes we hear of famous *Chance Doctors*, like *Jesus*, who by a Gift of God, Nature, or Fortune, without any Skill in the Structure of the Eyes, have been very successful in the Cure of one Distemper or other incident to them: Such was *Sir William Read*, who, tho no Scholar, nor of acquir'd Abilities in *Physick* and *Surgery*, yet cured his Thousands of sore or blind Eyes; and many of them too to the surprise and astonishment of profess'd *Surgeons* and *Physicians*. Whether He, or *Jesus*, cured the greater number of Blindness may be question'd. To please our *Divines*, it shall be granted that *Jesus* cured the greater Numbers; but that he cured worse or more difficult Distempers in the Eyes, can't be proved. *Sir William* indeed met with many Cases of blind and sore Eyes, that were out of the reach of his Power; and so did *Jesus* too, or he had never let great Multitudes of the blind, and otherwise distemper'd People, go unheal'd by him. Our *Divines* will here say, that it was never want of Power in *Jesus*, but want of Faith in the diseased, if he did not heal them; but in other *Surgeons* and *Physicians*, it is confessedly their own Insufficiency: To which I have only this
Answer,

Answer, that our *Physicians* and *Surgeons* are to be commended for their Ingenuity, to impute it to their own Defect of Power, and not to lay the Blame upon their Patients, when they can't cure them : And it is lucky for us Christians, that we have *this Salvo* for the Credit of *Jesus's* miraculously healing Power, that it was not fit, he should exert it against Unbelief ; otherwise, reasonably speaking, He, with *Sir William Read*, *Greatrex*, *Vespasian*, our former *Kings of England*, and *Seventh-Sons*, must have pass'd but for a *Chance-Doctor*.

But to come to the particular Consideration of the Miracle before us. *Jesus* restored, it seems, a blind Man to his Eyesight, by the use of a peculiar Ointment, and washing of his Eyes, as directed, in the Pool of *Siloam*. Where lies the Miracle ? I can't see it ; but hope our *Divines* will take their opportunity to point it out to me. Our *Surgeons* with their Ointments and Washings can cure sore and blind Eyes of one sort or other ; and *Jesus* did no more here ; and yet he must be reckon'd a Worker of Miracles ; and they, but artificial Operators : where's the Sense and Reason of this difference between them ? If *Mr. Moor*, the *Apothecary*, for the notable Cures he performs, by the means

means of his Medicines, should write himself, and be accounted by his Admirers, a *Miracle-worker*; he and they would be but laugh'd at for it: And yet *Jesus* for his curing the sore Eyes of a poor Man with an Ointment, must be had in veneration for a divine and miraculous Operator, as much as if by the breath of his Mouth, he had removed an huge Mountain!

A Miracle, if I mistake not the Notion of our *Divines* about it, is a supernatural Event, or a Work out of the Power of Nature or Art to effect. And when it is spoken of the Cure of a Disease, as of Blindness or Lameness, it ought to be so represented, as that skilful and experienced *Surgeons* and *Physicians*, who can do strange and surprizing Cures by Art, may give it upon their Judgment, that no Skill of Man could reach that Operation; but that it ought to pass for the Work of a divine and almighty Hand and Power: But there is no such care taken in the Description of any of the Diseases, which *Jesus* cured; much less of this before us; against the miraculoufness of which, consequently, there are these two Exceptions to be made:

First, That we know nothing of the Nature of this poor Man's Blindness; nor
what

what was the defect of his Eyes ; nor whether it was curable by Art or not : Without which Knowledge, it is impossible and unreasonable to assert, that there was a Miracle wrought in the Cure of him. If his blindness or weakness of Eye-sight was curable by human means, and Jesus did use those means, there's an end of the Miracle. If the *Evangelist* had given us an accurate Description of the Condition of this Man's Eyes before Cure, we could have judg'd better : But this is their constant neglect in all the Distempers *Jesus* heal'd, and is enough to induce us to doubt of his miraculous Power. There are, as I have said, some sorts of sore or blind Eyes curable by Art, as Experience does testify ; and there are others incurable, as *Physicians* and *Patients* do lament. Of which sort this Man's was, we know not. The worst that we know of his Case, is, that he was blind from his Birth, or Infancy, which might be ; and yet Time, Nature and Art, may give relief to him. As a Man advances in Years, the diseases of Childhood and Youth wear off. What we call the *King's-Evil*, or an Inflammation in the Eyes, in time will abate of its Malignity. Nature will not only by degrees work the Cure it-self, but the seasonable help of a good *Oculist* will soon expedite it,

it, tho in time of Infancy he could be of no use. And who knows but this might be the Case of this blind Man, whose Cure *Jesus* by his Art did only hasten and help forward. However, there are Grounds enough to suspect, that it was not divine Power which heal'd this Man, or *Jesus* had never prepared and order'd an *Ointment* and *Wash* for him.

Should our *Divines* suppose or describe, for the *Evangelist*, a state of Blindness in this Man, incurable by Art; that would be begging the Question, which no Unbeliever will grant. But to please them, I will yield, without Enquiry into the Nature of this Man's Blindness, that, if *Jesus* had used no Medicines; if with only a word of his Mouth he had cured the Man, and he had instantaneously recover'd, as the Word was spoken; here would have been a real and great Miracle, let the Blindness or Imperfection of the Man's Sight before, be of what kind or degree soever. But *Jesus's* use of Washings and Ointments absolutely spoils and destroys the Credit of the Miracle, and we ought by no means to ascribe *that* to the immediate Hand and Power of God, which *Medicines* and *Balsams* are apply'd to the Effect of. And this brings me to the

Second Exception against the miraculousness of the Cure of this blind Man, which is, that *Jesus* used human means, for the Cure of him; which means, whether they were at all proper and effectual in themselves, do affect the Credit of the Miracle, and give occasion of suspicion, that it was Art and not divine Power that heal'd him, or *Jesus*, for his Honour, had never had recourse to the use of them. And what were those Means, or that Medicine, which *Jesus* made use of? Why, "He spat upon the Ground, and made a Balsam of Dirt and Spittle, and anointed the poor Man's Eyes with it, and he recover'd." A strange and odd sort of an Ointment, that I believe was never used before, nor since, for sore and blind Eyes! I am not Student enough in *Physick* and *Surgery* to account for the natural and rational use of this Balsam; but wish that skilful Professors of those Sciences would help me out at this difficulty. If they could rationally account for the use of this Eye-salve, tho it was by supposing, that *Jesus* imperceptibly had in his Mouth a proper unctuous and Balsamick Substance, which he dissolv'd into Spittle, they would do great service to a certain Cause; and I wonder none of them whether

whether well or ill affected to Religion, have as yet bent their Thoughts to it.

In the Practice of *Physick* and *Surgery*, there are sometimes very odd and unaccountable Medicaments made use of; and now-and-then very whimsical and seemingly ridiculous ones, by old Women, to good Purpose: But none of them are to be compared to *Jesus's* Balsam for sore Eyes. I have heard of a merry *Mountebank* of Distinction, whose catholick Medicine was *Hasty-Pudding*, which indeed is a notable Remedy against the *Esuriency* of the Stomach, that the Poor often labour under. But *Jesus's* Eye-Salve, for Absurdity, whim, and incongruity, was never equall'd, either in jest or in earnest, by any *Quack-Doctor*. Whether *Infidels* think of this Ointment of the Holy *Jesus* with a smile; or reflect on it with disdain, I can't guess. As to myself, I should think with St. *Chrysostom* (2), that this Eye-Salve of *Jesus* would sooner put a Man's Eyes out, than restore a blind one to his Sight. And I believe that our *Divines*, for the Credit of the Miracle, and our *Surgeons*, for the Honour of their Science, will

(2) Quid Lutum illinere oportet? hoc potius cæcum reddere, quis unquam hoc pacto curatus est? *In Loc. Johān.*

agree, that it could not be naturally operative and effective of the Cure of the blind Man.

What then was the Reason of *Jesus's* using this strange Eye-Salve, when, for the sake of the Miracle, and for the honour of his own Power, he should have cured the Man with a word speaking? This is a Question and Objection in *St. Cyril* (3) against Ministers of the Letter, who are obliged to give an Answer to it, that will consist with the Wisdom and Power of *Jesus*, otherwise they must give up the Miracle, or make him a vain insignificant and trifling Agent. *St. Cyril*, of whose Mind I am, says (4) that the Reason of the use of this Balsam, made of Dirt and Spittle, is to be fetch'd from the Mystery. But, in as much as our *Divines* will never agree to that, which would be of ill Consequence to their Ministry, they must give a good Reason of their own, which I despair of seeing, that will comport with the Letter.

(3) *Quam ob causam dicet aliquis, cum omnia solo Verbo præstare possit, nulloque negotio, Lutum quidem sputo macerat? In Loc. Johan.*

(4) *Sed Rationem quandam mysticam habet Vis Rei ipsius de sputo. Ibid.*

St. *Irenæus* too, says (5), that the *Clay and Spittle* was of no service to the Cure of the blind Man; and yet *Jesus* did not use it *in vain*. Is not this an Inconsistency? How will our *Divines* adjust it? With *Irenæus*, I am sure they'll not mystically solve the Difficulty; therefore if they dont provide another Solution of it to satisfaction, either their Ministry of the Letter, or the Reputation of *Jesus*, and this Miracle, must suffer for it.

I am puzzled to think, how our *Divines* will extricate themselves out of this Strait, and account for the use of this Eye-Salve, without any Diminution of the Miracle. Surely, they will not say that *Jesus* used this senseless and insignificant Ointment to put a *Slur* upon the Practice of *Physick* and *Surgery*, as if other Medicines were of no more avail than his *Dirt* and *Spittle*. They have more wit than to say so; least it incense a noble and most useful Profession, not so much against themselves, as against *Jesus*, and provoke them to a

(5) Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat a Nativitate, jam non per sermonem sed per operationem præstitit visum; non vanè, neque prout evenit, hoc faciens, sed ut ostenderet manum Dei, eam quæ ab initio plasmavit Hominem, &c. Contra Hæres. L. v. c. 15.

nicer and stricter Enquiry than I can make into his Miracles, the Diseases he cured, and his manner of Operation; and to infer from thence, that he could be no miraculous Healer of Diseases who used Medicines; nor his *Evangelists* orthodox at Theology, who were so inexpert at Anatomy and the Description of bodily Distempers. This might be of bad Consequence to Religion: And yet I wonder that none of them, who may be supposed a little disaffected to Christianity, have taken the Hint from this pretended Miracle before us, and some others, to endeavour at a Proof of *Jesus's* being little better than a *Quack-Doctor*.

If I was, what I am not, an *Infidel*, I should think, from the Letter of this Story, that *Jesus* was a *juggling Impostor*, who would pass for a miraculous Healer of Diseases, tho he used underhand proper Medicines. The *Clay and the Spittle* he made an open shew of, as what, to Admiration, he would cure the blind Man with; but in reserve he had a more sanative Balam, that he subtilly slipt in the room of the Clay, and repeatedly to good purpose anointed the Man's Eyes with it. But as the Authority of the Fathers, and their mystical Interpretation of this Story, is alone my
safe-

safe-guard against such an ill opinion of *Jesus*; so I would now gladly know upon what Bottom the Faith of our *Divines* can stand, as to this Miracle, and *Jesus's* divine Power in it.

I have perused some of our *Commentators* on the Place, and don't perceive that they hesitate at this strange Eye-Salve; nor make any Questions about the pertinent or impertinent Use of it. Whether it is, that they sleep over the Story, or are aware of greater Difficultys in it, than can be easily surmounted, and therefore dare not touch on't, I know not. But now that we enjoy Liberty of Debate, which will make us Philosophers, and I have taken the Freedom to make a stricter Scrutiny than ordinary into *Jesus's* Miracles, and to consider what Absurditys, their Storys, and *this* in particular, are clog'd with; it is incumbent on our *Divines* to answer solidly these Questions, *viz.* What was the Reason of *Jesus's* Use of this Eye-Salve made of Clay and Spittle? Whether, if it was of service to the Cure of the blind Man, it does not destroy the Miracle? And if it had no Effect in the Cure of him, whether *Jesus* was not a *vain* and *trifling* Operator, making use of insignificant and impertinent Medicines to the Diminution
of

of his divine Power? These Questions are not ludicrous, but *calm and sedate Reasoning*, which *Bishop Smalbroke* (6) does not disapprove of. Therefore a grave, rational, and substantial Answer is expected to them, such as will be a Vindication of the Wisdom and Power of *Jesus*, without any Diminution of the Miracle.

Should our *Divines* say, that this Matter was an Act of unsearchable Wisdom, and must be left to the Will of our Saviour, and not curiously pry'd into, any more than some other Dispen-
 sations of Providence, that are past finding out: This Answer, which I believe to be the best, that can be given, will not do here. The Miracles of *Jesus* are, as our *Divines* own, Appeals to our Reason and Senses for his Authority; and by our Reason and Senses they are to be try'd, condemn'd or approved of. If they will not abide the test of Reason and Sense, they are to be rejected, and *Jesus's* Authority along with them. Therefore a more close, pertinent and serious Answer is to be given to the said Questions; which as I believe to

(6) See his Sermon before the Societys for Reformation,
 p. 12.

be impossible, consistently with the Letter; so our *Divines* must of necessity go along with me to the Fathers for a mystical and allegorical Interpretation of the Story of this Eye-Salve; or the Miracle will fall to the Ground, and *Jesus's* divine Power be in great danger with it.

St. Cyril, (who is one of *Bishop Smal-broke's* Greek Commentators, that should strictly adhere to the Letter) signifies, as I before observ'd, that *Jesus's* Use of this Clay and Spittle would be an Absurdity, if it was not to be accounted for, from the Mystery.

Eusebius Gallicanus, treating on this Miracle, says (7); " that our Saviour
" apparently manifests that his Miracles
" are of a spiritual and mystical Signifi-
" cation, because in the Work of them,
" he does somewhat or other, that lite-
" rally has no Sense nor Reason in it.
" As for Instance, in the Cure of this
" Blind Man, what occasion was there

(7) Ipse salvator noster apertissime ostendit, quod ejus Miracula aliquid significant; dum ea faciendo, aliquid agit, quod Ratione carere videatur. Nisi enim aliquid significaret, quid necessarium fuit, in hujus cæci Illuminatione, ut Lutum faceret, quo oculos ejus liniret, cui solum dicere sufficiens erat. Quæramus igitur significationem, & videamus quid cæcus iste significet. In *Homil. quarta post quartam Dominicam.*

“ for *Clay and Spittle* to anoint his Eyes,
 “ if it was not of a mystical meaning,
 “ when with a Word of his Mouth,
 “ *Jesus* could have cured him? Let us
 “ then set aside the Letter of the Story,
 “ and search for the Mystery, and con-
 “ sider who is meant by this blind
 “ Man, &c.”

Origen too, upon occasion of this
 Miracle, and its Absurdity according to
 the Letter, says (8); “ that whatever
 “ *Jesus* did in the Flesh was but Type
 “ and Figure of what he would do in
 “ Spirit, as is apparent from the Miracle
 “ of his curing a blind Man, which no-
 “ body knows why it was so done, if
 “ it be not to be understood of a mys-
 “ tical Ointment to open the Eyes of the
 “ blind in Understanding.”

And who then is this blind Man mys-
 tically? *St. Augustin* (9), *St. Jerome* (10),

(8) Similitudo erat & Typus futurorum unumquodque
 quod fiebat in Corpore. Veluti nescio quis à Nativitate
 cæcus Visum recuperavit. Vere autem cæcus iste erat à
 Nativitate Gentilium Populus, cui Salvator reddidit Vi-
 sum, Saliva sua ungens oculos ejus & mittens ad *Siloam*,
 quod interpretatur missus, mittebat quippe illos quos spi-
 ritu unxit ad Apostolos. *In Isai. c. vi.*

(9) Genus humanum est iste cæcus. *In Loc. Johan.*

(10) Cæcus humanum Genus significatur. *In Com.
 Johan.*

Eusebius Gallicanus (11), *St. Theophilus of Antioch* (12), *Origen* (13), *St. Cyril of Alexandria* (14), and *St. Theophylact* (15), (Four of them, *Bishop Smalbroke's* Greek and literal Commentators!) say, this *blind Man* is a Type of Mankind of all Nations, who in the Perfection of Time signified by the Sabbath (16) in the Story, is to be cured of this Blindness in Understanding.

And what is Mankind's Blindness here signified? *St. Augustin* (17), *St. Cyril* (18) and *St. Theophylact* (19), say, it is Ignorance, Error and Infidelity, or the want of the intellectual Sight and Knowledge of

(11) Cæcus iste a Nativitate, Genus humanum esse videtur à primo homine.---Hæc enim cæcitas non Corporis sed Animæ est. *In Loc. supra laudat.*

(12) Per cæcum naturaliter non videntem & illuminatum significat Genus humanum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(13) Vere autem cæcus iste erat à Nativitate Gentilium Populus. *In Isai. c. vi.*

(14) Cæci hujus Curationem in figuram & typum vocationis Gentium accepimus. *In Loc. Johan.*

(15) Intellige hoc Miraculum spiritualiter. Nam cæcus quidem erat omnis homo à Nativitate, id est, ab Initio Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

(16) In Sabbato est figura ultimi Temporis. *St. Cyril in Loc. Johan.*

(17) Cæcitas est Infidelitas. *In Loc.*

(18) Cæcus qui destituitur divino Lumine. *De Adorat. R. 414.*

(19) Cæcus qui sedet in tenebris omnis Ignorantiæ & non potuit videre Conditorem Mundi. *In Loc. Johan.*

God and his Providence. *Origen* (20), *St. John of Jerusalem* (21), and *St. Theophylact* (22), (*Still Bishop Smalbroke's* literal and Greek Commentators!) tell us the Reason of this spiritual Blindness of Mankind, and that is, because they adhere to the Letter of the Scriptures.

And how will *Jesus*, or right Reason and Truth, which are his mystical Names, cure Mankind of this his spiritual Blindness? By his mystical *Spittle* temper'd with mystical *Dirt*. And how shall we do to understand this mystical Ointment, so as to make it a Proper Medicine for Mankind's spiritual Blindness? *St. Theophilus of Antioch* (23), has an allegorical Interpretation of this *Clay* and *Spittle* of our Lord; but as it is hard to apprehend his meaning, I shall not here insist on it. *Origen* says (24), that the anointing of the blind Man's Eyes with

(20) Literam Legis sequentes, in Errores, Superstitiones & Infidelitatem incurrunt. *In Matt. Tract. xxvi.*

(21) Cæcus iste est cæcus in Litera, & hoc statu Sanari non potest. *In Marc. c. viii.*

(22) Cæci qui imperiti Scripturarum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(23) Lutum vero factum de Saliva oris Domini, ac positum super oculos cæci, significat hic, quod naturæ deerat, opere suo implere Figulum. *In Loc. Johan.*

(24) Saliva sua ungens Oculos cæci & mittens ad *Siloam* quod interpretatur *Missus*, mittebat quippe illos, quos spiritu unxit, &c. *In Isai. c. vi.*

Spittle,

Spittle, is to be understood of the Unc-
tion of the *Spirit* of Christ. But this
does not give us rightly to understand the
Metaphor and Figure. St. *John* of *Feru-*
salem says, that by the *Clay* and *Spittle*
is meant (25) *perfect Doctrine*, which in
Truth may open the Eyes of Mens Un-
derstanding: But what is *perfect Doctrine*?
Why, to help the Fathers out here, with-
out departing from their Opinions, by the
Spittle of Jesus must be understood the
Water of the Spirit instill'd into the
Earth of the Letter of the Scriptures,
which temper'd together, does, in the
Judgment of them all, make *perfect Doc-*
trine to the opening of the Eyes of our
Understanding in the Knowledge of the
Providence of God of all Ages; which
Knowledge, Light, Sight, or Illumination,
Mankind has hitherto wanted.

St. *Irenæus* (26), gives an excellent and
mystical Reason, by himself, for the use

(25) Saliva est perfecta Doctrina. *In Marc. c. viii.*

(26) Ei autem qui cæcus fuerat à Nativitate, jam non
per sermonem sed per operationem præstitit Visum; non
vanè neque prout evenit hoc faciens, sed ut ostenderet
manum Dei, eam que ab Initio plasmavit hominem.
Quapropter expuit in Terram & fecit Lutum, & super-
linivit illud Oculis, ostendens antiquam Plasmationem,
quemadmodum facta est, & manum Dei manifestans his
qui intelligere possunt, per quam è Limo plasmatus est
homo. *Cont. Hæreses. L. v. c. 15.*

of

of this Ointment of *Clay* and *Spittle*, to the Cure of this blind Man, which I shall not stay to illustrate, but only have cited it for the Meditation of the Learned and Curious.

The Story of the blind Man, as St. *John* has related it, is long, and would take up more time, than I have to spare at present, to go thro' all the Parts of it. What I have done at present is enough to awaken others to the Consideration, not only of the Absurdities of the Letter, but of the mystical Interpretation of the rest.

The Miracle, which consisted literally in the Cure of a blind Man by the use of an Ointment made of *Dirt* and *Spittle*, is absurd, senseless and unaccountable; but in the Mystery, there is Wisdom and Reason. And the Cure of Mankind of the Blindness of his Understanding, by the *Spirit's* being temper'd with the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is the mystical *Eye-Salve*, will not only be a most stupendous Miracle, but a Proof of *Jesus's* *Messiahship* beyond all contradiction, in as much as by such an opening of the Eyes of our Understandings, which have been hitherto dark, we shall see, how he is the Accomplishment of the Law and the Prophets. And so I pass to a

10. Tenth Miracle of *Jesus*, viz. (27) *That of his turning Water into Wine, at a Marriage in Cana of Galilee.* This is call'd the beginning of *Jesus's* Miracles; but whether it is to be understood of the *First* of his whole Life, or of the *First* that he wrought in *Cana of Galilee*, is not agreed amongst *Divines*. I shall not enter into the Dispute, which as it is of no Consequence to my Cause in hand; so I shall pass it by, and not urge any Arguments for or against either side of it.

Tho I would not for the World be so impious and profane as to believe, what is contain'd and imply'd in the Letter of this Story; yet I am still too grave to handle it as ludicrously as I ought; and it is now against the grain, that I write so freely as I shall against it, being unwilling, not only to put the *Clergy* out of all Temper, but, to give *Scoffers* and *Infidels* so great an Advantage against their Ministry of the Letter. Some may wonder that I, who have gone so far in the ludicrous display of the gross Absurdities of some other Miracles, should boggle at this. But to be ingenuous, and speak the Truth sincerely,

(27) John ii.

I am

I am still a Christian (for all what the *Bishop of St. David's*, (28) *Arch-deacon Stubbs*, and others would make of me) upon the Principles of the Fathers; and have a greater Veneration for the Person of the Holy *Jesus*, than to be forward to make such sport with him, his Mother, and his Disciples, as this Story affords Scope for. And if it was not for the necessity of turning the *Clergy's* Heads to the Consideration of Mysteries, this Miracle should have been pass'd by in silence.

There were some antiently, whom *St. Chrysostom* (29) writes of, whether *Jews*; *Gentiles*, or *Hereticks*, I know not, who took great offence at the Story of this Wedding, accounting it, from what is related in *St. John*, as a riotous Feast, and that *Jesus* and his Mother, and his Disciples, not only bore a part in the Revellings, but were most to blame for them; or he should not have countenanced them with his Presence, much less promoted them, by the Change of a large quantity of Water into Wine for the use of a Company, who were already drunk

(28) See his *Speech in Convocation*, printed in the *Post-Boy* of March the 30th.

(29) Rursus hoc in loco calumniantur nonnulli hunc ebriosorum fuisse Conventum, &c. In *Loc. Johan.*

with it. But I, with *St. Chrysostom*, am inclined to believe, that, if *Jesus* did grace this Wedding with his Presence, there was no Excess encouraged, or so much as suffer'd at it. If he did accept of the Invitation of the Bridegroom, it was for an opportunity, not so much to turn *Water* into *Wine*, as to make a proper Discourse to the People of conjugal Duties; and, as he was a searcher of the Hearts, secretly to admonish the Married of the Sin and Mischief of Adultery; tho we read not of a seasonable and good Word spoken at it.

And the Empress *Eudocia*, a nursing Mother of the Church, has given us a Poetical, and I hope a fictitious Description of this Wedding. She makes a sumptuous and voluptuous Feast of it; and writes (30) of *Musick* and *Dancing* in abundance, enough to make us think of such Mirth and Pastime here, as was unbecoming of a Company of Saints to be present at. Whether it was, that this

(30) *Pueri aut Saltatores volutabantur, in his autem Tibiæ, Lyræque Vocem habebant. Mulieres autem Cantum accipientes, volvebantur per medias Quæcunque optimatum erant uxores atque filiæ. Illi vero ad Saltationem & desiderabilem Cantum Conversi delectabantur, &c.*

In Homero-Centoni.

E

Empress,

Empress, being only accustom'd to the Excesses of a Court, could form no meaner Conceptions of a Country Wedding; or whether she had any extra-scriptural Authority for what she writ, I know not: But I believe, that, if *Jesus* was at all at a Marriage-Feast, the whole was conducted with Decency, Order, and Sobriety; and if he there wrought any Miracle, it was to manifest his Glory, to the Conversion of some, and Confirmation of the Faith of others.

And our *Translators* of the *Bible* too have given occasion to suspect somewhat of Excess at this Wedding; or they need not have made the Waterpots to hold two or three Firkins apiece. If I had been the Translator, they should not have held above two or three *Pints* apiece, which Measure is as agreeable to the Original as *Firkin*; neither can I imagine, that *Jesus*, if he did convert Water into Wine, would do it in so large a Measure, for fear of an intemperate abuse of it, but only gave the Company a cast of his miraculous Power, and a little taste of his Love and Good-will to them.

Such are the Conceptions, that, to the Honour of *Jesus*, I am willing to form of this *Wedding*; and wish that the
Letter

Letter of the Story did suggest no worse Thoughts of it to us. I should e pleas'd, if no *Infidel* really could, what I, but for the sake of the Mystery most unwillingly should, write any ludicrous Descants on it. But if this Story had been related of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, as it is of our *Jesus*, I would have ridicul'd and satiriz'd it to the utmost of my Power, and have render'd him and his Disciples of all Nations, as contemptible as I could, for the Belief of it; and I don't doubt, but our *Christian Priests* would have given me ample Praises and Commendations for so doing. It is said of *Apollonius*, that for the Entertainment of his Friends, he commanded variety of nice Dishes of Meat, together with Bowls of choicest Wine, all on a sudden to descend upon his Table and range themselves in good Order. Whether there was any Truth in this Miracle of *Apollonius*, is not the Question; but *Mr. Chandler* (31) could see a Fault in it, (tho none in *Jesus's* Wine at this Wedding) as if it was done for the Pleasure of luxurious Appetites, tho we read of no Intemperance at it, which can't be said of the *Wedding-Feast* before us. Our

(31) *Vindication of the Christian Religion.* p. 82.

Divines I suppose, no more than myself, believe any thing of the said Miracle in *Apollonius*; but, if it was really wrought, I fancy, I could have lampoon'd him for it, and would have made it a diabolical Work, like that, as Fables go, of the Feastings of *Wizards* and *Witches*; and our *Divines* (passing by *Jesus's Wine* here) would readily, as they are Believers of the Storys of Witchcraft, have struck in with me.

But setting aside that miraculous Story of *Apollonius*, which has but *one* Voucher; the Case before us is *Jesus's turning Water into Wine* for the use of Men, who had before *well drank*. How shall I force Nature and Faith to ridicule this Story? How shall I lay aside that profound Veneration for the Holy *Jesus*, which Conversation with the Fathers, more than the Prejudice of Education has begotten in me, and ludicrously here treat him and his Miracle too, as is incumbent upon me, to make way for the Mystery? In short, I can't do it, in my own Name; but having met with a satirical Invective of a supposed Jewish *Rabbi* to this purpose, I here publish it, that our *Clergy*, as well as myself, may think of an Answer to it, and so prevent that Mischief it may do by being handed

handed about among *Jews* and *Infidels* in Manuscript. It is as follows;

“ You Christians pay Adoration to
 “ *Jesus*, whom you believe to be a di-
 “ vine Author of Religion, sent of God
 “ for the Instruction, Reformation and
 “ Salvation of Mankind; and what In-
 “ duces you to this Belief of him, is,
 “ (besides some obscure Prophecies, which
 “ you can’t agree upon, and which nei-
 “ ther your selves, nor any body else
 “ understands the Application of) the
 “ History of his Miracles: But I won-
 “ der, you should have a good opinion
 “ of him for his Miracles, which, if he
 “ wrought no better than what are re-
 “ corded of him, by your *Evangelists*,
 “ are if duly consider’d, enough to a-
 “ lienate your Hearts from him. I can’t
 “ spare time now to examine into all of
 “ them, but according to the cursory
 “ Observation I have made on them, there
 “ is not one so well circumstanced, as to
 “ merit a considerate Man’s belief, that
 “ it was the Work of an omnipotent,
 “ all-wise, just and good Agent. Some
 “ of them are absurd Tales, others foo-
 “ lish Facts, others unjust Actions, others
 “ ludicrous Pranks, others juggling Tricks,
 “ others magical Enchantments; and if
 “ many

“ many of them had been better and
 “ greater Operations than they are, and
 “ of a more useful and stupendous na-
 “ ture than they seem to be ; yet the
 “ first Miracle that he wrought, *viz.*
 “ that of his *turning Water into Wine*
 “ at an extravagant and voluptuous Wed-
 “ ding at *Cana of Galilee*, is enough to
 “ turn our Stomachs against all the rest.
 “ It is in itself enough to beget in us
 “ an ill opinion of *Jesus*, and to prepossess
 “ us with an aversion to his Religion,
 “ without farther Examination into it.
 “ It is enough to make us suspect his o-
 “ ther Miracles, of what name soever,
 “ to be of a base, magical, and diabolical
 “ Extraction; or he had never set
 “ up for a Divine worker of Miracles
 “ with so ill a grace. Would any so-
 “ ber, grave, serious and divine Person,
 “ as you Christians suppose *Jesus* to have
 “ been, have vouchsaf’d his Presence at
 “ a Wedding, where such Levities, Di-
 “ versions and Excesses (in our Nation of
 “ the *Jews*, as well as in all others)
 “ were indulg’d on such Occasions, as
 “ were not fit to be seen, much less
 “ countenanc’d by the *Saint*, you would
 “ make of him. If your *Jesus*, his Mo-
 “ ther, and his Disciples had not been
 “ merry Folks in themselves, they would
 “ have

“ have declined the Invitation of the
 “ *Bridegroom*; nay, if they had been at
 “ all graver and more serious People
 “ than ordinary, no Invitation had been
 “ given to such *Spoil-Sports*: But boon
 “ Companions they were, and of comi-
 “ cal Conversation, or there had been
 “ at a Wedding no Room for them. You
 “ Christians may fancy, what you please,
 “ of *Jesus* and his Mother’s Saintship;
 “ but the very Text of the Story im-
 “ plies they were Lovers of good Fel-
 “ lowship and excess too, upon occa-
 “ sion; or he had never, upon her Inti-
 “ mation, turn’d so large a quantity of
 “ Water into Wine, after all or most of
 “ the Company were far gone with it.
 “ You may suppose, if you please, that
 “ all were sober, and none intoxicated,
 “ and that the want of Wine pro-
 “ ceeded from the abundance of Com-
 “ pany, rather than excess in drinking;
 “ but why then did *John* the *Evange-*
 “ *list* use the word *μεθυσάσθαι*, which im-
 “ plies, they were more than half seas
 “ over? And if *Jesus* and his Mother
 “ had not both a mind to *top* them up;
 “ the one would not have requested, nor
 “ the other have granted a Miracle to
 “ that purpose. Whether *Jesus* and his
 “ Mother themselves were at all *cut*, as
 “ were

“ were others of the Company, is not
 “ so certain. She might be an abstemi-
 “ ous Dame for ought we know; tho if
 “ old Stories are true of her familiarity
 “ with a *Soldier*, of whom came her
 “ *chara Deum Soboles*, in all probabi-
 “ lity, she would take a *Dram* and a *Bot-*
 “ *tle* too. But it looks as if *Jesus* him-
 “ self was a little *in for't*, or he had
 “ never spoke so waspishly and snap-
 “ pishly to his Mother, saying, *Woman,*
 “ *what have I to do with thee? mine*
 “ *Hour is not yet come:* which was ve-
 “ ry unbecoming of a dutiful Son, who,
 “ excepting when he ran away from
 “ his Parents, and put them to (32)
 “ *Sorrow* and *Trouble* to look him up,
 “ was, and is still in heaven, say the
 “ *Roman Catholicks*, a most obedient Child.
 “ You modern Christians may put what
 “ *Construction* you can upon the words
 “ above of *Jesus* to his Mother, to salve
 “ his Credit; but the Fathers of your
 “ Church (33) confess them to be a sharp
 “ and surly Reply to her, which, if it
 “ did not proceed from the natural bad-

(32) Luke ii. 48.

(33) *Christus asperius respondit, quid tibi & mihi*
Mulier? St. Chrysost. in Loc. Johan. Vide & Theophy-
last. in Loc.

“ nefs

“ nefs of his Temper, derived, *ex traduce*,
 “ from his supposed Father yet, was cer-
 “ tainly the effect of Drinking; and
 “ that’s the more likely, because it is
 “ a *broken* and *witless* Sentence, such as
 “ *Fuddlecaps* utter by halves, when the
 “ *Wine’s in*, and the *Wit’s out*. Your
 “ modern *Commentators* are sadly puz-
 “ led to make good Sense of this bro-
 “ ken and abrupt Sentence of *Jesus*, and
 “ a pertinent Reply of it, to what his
 “ Mother said to him, *they have no*
 “ *Wine*: If you will bear with me, I’ll
 “ help you out at this dead lift, and
 “ give you the true meaning of it *thus*.
 “ *Jesus’s* Mother being apprised of a
 “ deficiency of Wine, and willing, as well
 “ as the *Bridegroom*, that the *Company*
 “ should be thorowly merry before they
 “ parted, intimates to her Son, (whom
 “ she knew to be initiated in the My-
 “ sterys of *Bacchus*) *that they had no*
 “ *Wine*: But before she could finish her
 “ Request to him, He, mistaking her
 “ meaning, imagines, she was caution-
 “ ing against drinking more Wine, and
 “ exhorting him to go home, where-
 “ upon he takes her up short and quick,
 “ saying, *Woman, what have you to do*
 “ *with me?* (for that too is the *English*
 “ of the *Greek*) I’ll not be interrupted

“ in my Cups, nor break Company;
 “ *for mine Hour is not yet come to de-*
 “ part : But after he rightly apprehended
 “ her, he goes to work, and rather than
 “ the Company should want their *Fill*,
 “ by trick of Art, like a *Punch-maker*,
 “ meliorates Water into what they call’d
 “ Wine. That this is the obvious Inter-
 “ pretation, and natural Paraphrase of the
 “ Words before us, shall be try’d by the
 “ absurd Comments now-a-days put up-
 “ on them, that are enough to make a
 “ confiderate Man laugh, if not hiss at
 “ them.

“ Some antient Hereticks (34), very
 “ gravely infer’d from this Expression,
 “ *Woman, what have I to do with thee*,
 “ that *Mary* was neither a Virgin, nor
 “ *Jesus* her Son; or he had never ac-
 “ costed her with such blunt Language,
 “ that implys, they could not be so a-
 “ kin to each other. This was a per-
 “ plexity to St. *Augustin*, and gave him
 “ some trouble to explain the Expres-
 “ sion, consistently with her Virginity
 “ (for all she cohabited with the old Car-
 “ penter) and his Filiation. But this
 “ being a quibble, that has been long
 “ since dropt, I shall not revive, nor in-

(34) Vide Sanctum Augustinum. In Loc. *Johan*.

“ sit on it. But that the Expression
 “ above do’s suppose a little Inebriation
 “ in *Jesus*, I may averr, neither is
 “ there a better Solution to be made of
 “ it.

“ The Fathers of your Church, be-
 “ ing sensible of the absurdity, abrupt-
 “ ness, impertinence, pertness, and senseless-
 “ ness of the Passage before us accord-
 “ ing to the Letter, had recourse to a
 “ mystical and allegorical Interpretation,
 “ as the only way to make it consistent
 “ with the Wisdom, Sobriety and Duty
 “ of the Holy *Jesus*. But you *Moderns*,
 “ abandoning Allegories and Mysteries in
 “ Miracles, have endeavour’d, I say, to
 “ put other Constructions upon it, as may
 “ comport with the Letter and Credit of
 “ *Jesus*: But how insipid and senseless
 “ they are, I appeal to a reasonable Man,
 “ who will give himself the trouble to
 “ consult them, upon the Place, and
 “ save me the pains of a tedious and
 “ nauseous Work to recount them for
 “ him.

“ But to humour the Christian Priest-
 “ hood at this Day, I will suppose that
 “ *Jesus*, and his Mother, and Disciples,
 “ tho’ Fishermen, to have been all sober,
 “ grave, and serious at this Wedding, sui-
 “ tably to the Opinion that their Fol-

“ lowers now would have us to enter-
 “ tain of them. But then it is hard to
 “ conceive them, less than Spectators and
 “ even Encouragers of Excess and Intem-
 “ perance in others; or *Jesus*, after their
 “ more than sufficient drinking for the sa-
 “ tisfaction of Nature, had never turn’d
 “ Water into Wine, nor would his Mo-
 “ ther have requested him to do it, if, I
 “ say, they had not a mind, and took
 “ Pleasure in it too, to see the Company
 “ quite *stitch’d up*.

“ A sober, prudent and wise Philoso-
 “ pher or *Magician*, in the place of
 “ *Jesus*, if he had an Art or Power to
 “ turn Water into Wine, would never
 “ have exercis’d it upon such an occa-
 “ sion; no, not to please his best Friends,
 “ nor in obedience to the most indul-
 “ gent Parent. What would he have
 “ said in such a Case? *That* the Com-
 “ pany had drank sufficiently already,
 “ and there was no need of more Wine :
 “ The Bridegroom had kindly and plen-
 “ tifully entertain’d his Guests, and he
 “ would not for the Honour of God,
 “ who had endow’d him with a divine
 “ Power, be at the Expence of a Mi-
 “ racle to promote the least Intemperance.
 “ Whether such a Speech and Resolu-
 “ tion in *Jesus*, upon this occasion,
 “ would

“ would not have been more commen-
 “ dable, than what he did, let any one
 “ judge.

“ If I was a Christian, I would, for
 “ the Honour of *Jesus*, renounce this
 “ Miracle, and not magnify and extol
 “ it as a divine and good Act, as many
 “ now-a-days do. I would give into,
 “ and contend for the Truth of *that*
 “ *Gloss*, which the *Gentiles* of old (35)
 “ by way of Objection put upon it,
 “ viz. *That the Company having ex-*
 “ *hausted the Bridegroom's Stock of Wine,*
 “ *and being in Expectation of more;*
 “ *Jesus, rather than the Bridegroom should*
 “ *be put to the Blush for deficiency,*
 “ *palm'd a false Miracle, by the help*
 “ *of the Governour of the Feast, upon*
 “ *a drunken Crew; that is, having some*
 “ *spirituous Liquors at hand, mingled*
 “ *them with a quantity of Water, which*
 “ *the Governour of the Feast vouch'd*
 “ *to be incomparable good Wine, mira-*
 “ *culously made by Jesus: and the Com-*
 “ *pany being, thro' a vitiated Palate,*
 “ *uncapable of distinguishing better from*
 “ *worse, and of discovering the Fraud,*
 “ *admired the Wine and the Miracle;*
 “ *and applauded Jesus for it, and per-*

(35) Apud St. Chrysostomum in Loc. *Johan.*

“ *haps became his Disciples upon it. If*
 “ I, I say, was a Disciple of *Jesus*, I
 “ would give this Story such an old
 “ Turn for his Credit. And I appeal
 “ to indifferent Judges, whether such a
 “ daubing of the Miracle, to remove the
 “ Offence of *Infidels* at this Day, would
 “ not be polytically and wisely done of
 “ me. Whether modern Christians may
 “ be brought into such a Notion of
 “ this supposed Miracle, I know not;
 “ but really there is Room enough to
 “ suspect such a Fraud in it.

“ But supposing *Jesus's* Change of
 “ Water into Wine to have been a real
 “ Miracle; none commission'd of God
 “ for the Reformation and Instruction
 “ of Mankind would ever have done it
 “ here. Miracles (as Mr. *Chandler* (36)
 “ says excellently well) *must be such*
 “ *things, as that it is consistent with*
 “ *the perfections of God, to interest*
 “ *himself in; and again, they must ar-*
 “ *gue not only the Power of God, but*
 “ *his Love to Mankind, and his Inclina-*
 “ *tion to do them good; which this of*
 “ *Jesus* is so far from, that it has
 “ an evil Aspect and Tendency, as is
 “ above represented; consequently it is

(36) *Vindication of the Christian Religion*, p. 82.

“ to be rejected, and no longer esteem’d
 “ a divine Miracle; neither is *Jesus* to
 “ be received as a Revealer of God’s
 “ Will for it, as Mr. *Chandler* will bear
 “ me witness.

“ No doubt on’t, but you Christian
 “ Priests would have us *Jews* and *In-*
 “ *fidels*, to believe the whole Com-
 “ pany at this Wedding, for all what
 “ is intimated by St. *John* to the con-
 “ trary, to consist of sober and demure
 “ Saints. I will suppose so? but then,
 “ what occasion had they at all for
 “ Wine? What reason could there be
 “ for God’s Power to interpose and make
 “ it, especially in so large a quantity,
 “ for them? I can conceive none. If
 “ any of the Company had been taken
 “ with fainting Fits; and *Jesus* for
 “ want of a Cordial Bottle, had created
 “ a chearing Dram or two, I could not
 “ have found fault with it; tho even
 “ here, if he had restored the *Patient*
 “ with a word of his Mouth, it had
 “ been a better Miracle than making
 “ of Wine for him: But that he should
 “ make for a Company of Sots, a large
 “ quantity of Wine, of no less than
 “ twelve or eighteen Firkins of *English*
 “ Measure, enough to intoxicate the
 “ whole Town of *Cana* of *Galilee*, is
 “ what

“ what can never be accounted for by
 “ a Christian, who should, one would
 “ think, wish this Story, for the Repu-
 “ tation of *Jesus* expunged out of the
 “ New Testament.

“ Besides, if *Jesus* had really and mi-
 “ raculously made Wine, which no Power
 “ or Art of Man could do, he should,
 “ to prevent all suspicion of deceit in
 “ the Miracle, have done it without
 “ the use of Water. You Christians say,
 “ he is the original Cause of all Things
 “ out of Nothing; why then did he
 “ not (37) create this Wine out of no-
 “ thing? why did he not order the
 “ Pots to be emptied of their Water,
 “ if there was any in them, and then
 “ with a word of his Mouth command
 “ the filling them with Wine instead of
 “ it? Here had been an unexceptiona-
 “ ble Miracle, which no *Infidels* could
 “ have cavil'd at, for any thing, but the
 “ needlessness of it. But this subject
 “ Matter of Waters spoils the Credit of
 “ the Miracle. The Water-Pots, it seems,
 “ are to be fill'd before *Jesus* could do

(37) Sed quamam gratia, antequam implerentur, non
 fecit Miraculum, quod longè fuisset admirabilius? Siqui-
 dem aliud est subjectæ Materiæ qualitatem mutare, ali-
 ud ipsam substantiam ex nihilo facere. *Chrysos. in Loc.*

“ the

“ the notable Feat ; is not this enough
 “ to make us think, that *Jesus* was but
 “ an artificial *Punch-maker* ? Could not
 “ he create Wine without Water for a
 “ Transmutation ? Yes, you’ll say he
 “ could : what was the Reason then, that
 “ he did not ? This is a reasonable Ques-
 “ tion to a learned Priesthood ; and a ra-
 “ tional Answer should be given to
 “ it. And a Question too it is that
 “ heretofore has been under debate.
 “ Some said that the Water might be
 “ used to abate of the (38) immensity
 “ of the Miracle, which otherwise for
 “ its greatness might have surpass’d all
 “ belief. But this Reason will not do.
 “ A Miracle can’t be too great in itself,
 “ if well attested, to transcend Credit :
 “ but it may easily be too little to con-
 “ ciliate the Faith of a Free-Thinker.
 “ The Fathers of your Church fetch’d a
 “ Reason, for the use of Water here,
 “ from the Mystery ; but since Mysterys
 “ on Miracles are set aside by the Priest-
 “ hood of this Age, they are to assign
 “ another and good Reason of their own ;
 “ or this Miracle is to be rejected, as a
 “ piece of Art and Craft in the Ope-

F (38) Sæpe obest Magnitudo, ne Miracula creditu sint
 facilia. *Theophylact. in Loc.*

“ rator, if for no other Reason than this,
 “ that *Jesus* used Water to make Wine.

“ All that I have to say more to this
 “ Miracle, is, that it is to be wish'd, if
 “ *Jesus* could turn Water into Wine, that
 “ he had imparted the Secret and Power
 “ to his Disciples of the *Priesthood* of
 “ all Ages since, which would have been
 “ of greatest Advantage to them in this
 “ World. He has empower'd them, they
 “ say, to remit Sins, which few old
 “ Sinners think themselves the less in
 “ danger for : And he has enabled them,
 “ some say, to transubstantiate Bread in-
 “ to Flesh, and Wine into Blood,
 “ which none but foolish and supersti-
 “ tious Folks believe they ever did :
 “ And he promised to invest them with
 “ a Power to do greater Miracles than
 “ himself, even to remove Mountains,
 “ and to curse Trees ; but I thank God,
 “ they never were of so strong a Faith,
 “ as to put it in Practice, or we might
 “ have heard of the *natural* state, as well
 “ as we do now of the *civil* state of some
 “ Countrys, ruin'd and overturn'd by
 “ them. But this Power to transmute
 “ *Water into Wine*, without Labour and
 “ Expence, would have been of better
 “ worth to them, than all their other
 “ Priestly Offices. Not, that our Con-
 “ duits

“ duits would thereupon run with Wine,
 “ instead of Water ; or that Wine would
 “ be cheaper and more plentiful than it
 “ is now, excepting among themselves,
 “ if they could withal curse Vineyards.
 “ They would make the best Penny they
 “ could of their divine Power. And as
 “ surely as they can now sell the Water-
 “ drops of their Fingers at a Christening,
 “ at a good Rate, they would set a better
 “ Price on their miraculously made Wine,
 “ and give a notable Reason for its dear-
 “ ness, *viz.* that Miracles should not be
 “ cheap, which would bring them into
 “ Contempt, and lessen the Wonder and
 “ Admiration of them.”

So ends the Invective of a suppos'd
 Jewish *Rabbi* against this Miracle; which
 our *Divines*, as well as myself, are to
 consider of an Answer to. Whether they
 shall think themselves able to answer
 the rational Parts of it, consistently with
 the Letter, I know not; but I own my-
 self unable, and believe it impossible for
 them, to do it: And therefore they must
 of necessity go along with me to the
 mystical Interpretation of the Fathers;
 or this Miracle will turn to the dis-
 honour of *Jesus*, and disadvantage of his
 Religion.

Justin Martyr (39) says, it is absurd to take the Stories of the Marriages and Concubinages of the *Patriarchs* of the Old Testament in a literal Sense. And indeed, literally consider'd, they are some of them too lascivious Tales to be related by divine and inspired Penmen: whereupon he, as well as *St. Paul* and *Philo Judæus* (40), turn those Stories, for the Honour of God and Edification of his Church, into an Allegory. Consequently, if *Justin* had had an occasion to speak of this Marriage before us, there's no doubt on't, but he would have made Mystery of all and every Part of it.

To the same purpose *Origen* (41) says,
 “ That since the Law is a shadow of
 “ good Things to come, and writes some-
 “ times of Marriages and of Husbands
 “ and Wives; we are not to understand
 “ it of Marriages according to the Flesh,
 “ but of the spiritual Marriage between
 “ Christ and his Church. As for Instance,
 “ *Abraham* had two Sons, &c. here we
 “ ought not to confine our Thoughts to
 “ carnal Marriages, and their Offsprings;
 “ but to extend them to the Mysteries

(39) In Dialog. cum Tryphone, p. 364.

(40) In Lib. de Abrahamo.

(41) In Matt. Tract. xxii.

here signified. And there are almost a
 " thousand other places in Scripture about
 " Marriages; but in every place (*unus-*
 " *quisque Locus castum & divinum de*
 " *Nuptiis continet Intellectum secundum*
 " *Expositionem moralem*) is to have a di-
 " vine, moral, and mystical Construction
 " put on't. Whoever therefore reads the
 " Scriptures about Marriages, and under-
 " stands no more by them, than carnal
 " Marriages; he errs, not knowing the
 " Scriptures nor the Power of God."

From hence may be easily concluded,
 what was *Origen's* opinion about this
 Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*, if there were
 no other Passages in him for a Confir-
 mation of it. But to come closer to the
 Purpose.

St. Augustin (42) says, there is Myf-
 tery signified in the Story of this Marriage;
 as in all *Jesus's* Miracles, which it be-
 comes us to open and search for; till, if
 possible, we are *inebriated* with the spiri-
 tual and invisible Wine, that *Jesus* made

(42) Aliquid enim & in ipsis factis innuit nobis, puto,
 quia non sine causa venit ad Nuptias. Excepto Mira-
 culo, aliquid in ipso facto Mysterii & Sacramenti latet,
 Pulsemus ut aperiet & de Vino invisibili inebriet nos.
In Loc. Johan.

at this Feast. And again (43) says, Let us then consider the several Particulars of the Story, and what is meant by the six Waterpots; and the Water that is turn'd into Wine; and the Governor of the Feast; and who are the Bridegroom and the Bride; and who is the Mother of *Jesus* in a Mystery; and what is to be understood by the Marriage.

And again, says St. *Augustin* (44) there is Mystery in this Marriage, or *Jesus* upon no invitation had gone to it. The Bridegroom is our Lord himself, to whom it is said thou hast reserv'd the good Wine of the Gospel *until now*, that is, until the typified Time of the Celebration of this mystical Marriage, which according to St. *Augustin* (45) is to be on the sixth Age of the World, signified by the six Water-Pots, holding two or three Firkins apiece,

(43) Nihil dicemus, quid sibi velint Hydriæ, quid Aqua in Vinum couersa, quid Architriclinius, quid Sponsus, quid Mater Jesu in Mysterio, quid ipsæ Nuptiæ? *Ibid.*

(44) Per hoc invitatus Dominus venit ad Nuptias, ut ostenderetur Sacramentam Nuptiarum, — Illarum Nuptiarum Sponsus Personam Domini figurabat, cui dictum est, servasti bonum Vinum usque adhuc, Bonum Vinum id est Evangelium servasti usque adhuc. *Ibid.*

(45) Sex Hydriæ sunt sex Ætates Temporum capientes Prophetiam pertinentem ad omnes gentes sive in duobus generibus hominum, id est, Judeis & Græcis, sive in tribus propter Noe tres Filios. *Ibid.*

that

that is, all Mankind, as they are divided into the *two* sorts of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, or into *three*, as they are descended of the *three* Sons of *Noah*.

And in another Place, the same St. *Augustin* interpreting this Story, says (46) thus; " Our Saviour is invited to a Marriage; what can that mean but that the Holy Spirit is courted and invocated by the Church, wishing to be espoused to him? *Jesus* comes with his Disciples, that is, into a holy Place of a Company of Saints. *Mary* the Mother of our Lord signifies to him, *that they have no Wine*; so the Church makes known to him, the Deficiency of the Spirit, which she waits for the Power of. And if *Jesus* calls *Mary*, a Woman; he means the Church, who by Transfiguration may be a Virgin, the Mother, the Spouse of Christ, and a Whore too."

(46) Vocatur Salvator ad Nuptias, hoc est, Ecclesie voto spiritus sanctus invocatur.—Venit cum Discipulis suis, id est, in Loco sancto, Turba sanctorum. Mirabilia Dei Maria Mater expectat, hoc est, virtutem Christi expectat Ecclesia.—Maria ait, ecce Vina deficiant, hoc est, Vinum Spiritus Ecclesia optat excipere.—Numquid Mulierem dicit Jesu Mariam, quæ Virgo post Pactum inventa est? Sed Ecclesiam alloquitur, quæ non solam Mulier, sed meretrix nuncupatur. *In Sermon xcii. Append.*

And

And again *St. Augustin* explaining (47) what is meant by the Water, and the Wine that it wou'd be turn'd into, at the Time of the spiritual Celebration of this Marriage of Christ with his Spouse of the Church, says plainly enough, that by *Water* is meant the Letter of the Scriptures; and by the best *Wine* is to be understood spiritual Interpretations, which would transport the understandings of Men with divine knowledge; and warm their Hearts and Affections into a spiritual *Inebriation*; after the similitude of Wine natural.

St. Theophilus of *Antioch*, a most antient Greek Commentator (who according to *Bishop Smalbroke* should strictly adhere to the Letter) says (48), that by this Mar-

(47) Vinum multis Locis accipimus Scripturas Sanctas meracissimum Vigorem cœlestis sapientiæ continentes, quibus incalescant sensus & inebrientur Affectus. Operante Christo in Cana Galileæ Vinum defecit & Vinum fit, id est, Umbra removetur & Veritas præsentatur. Recedit Lex, Gratia succedit. Carnalia spiritualibus commutantur. Bonum quidem Vinum est vetus Testamentum, sed sine spirituali Intellectu vanescit in Litera. *In Serm. xc. Append.* Sed illud quod in Litera Legis aquam sapiebat, dum spiritualiter intelligi fecit, aquam in Vinum convertit. *In Sermon xci. Append.*

(49) Per Nuptias, Conjunctionem Christi & Ecclesiæ hoc est Veteris & Novi Testamenti Traditionem debemus accipere. Spousus est Christus, Architriclinius est Moses. *In Loc. Johan.*

riage

riage is meant the Conjunction of Christ and his Church, as it is the Tradition of the Old and New Testament. And that *Jesus* himself is the Bridegroom; and *Moses* the Governor of the Feast.

Other Fathers, such as St. *Cyril*, St. *Theophylact* and St. *Jerome* are of the same mind about the mystical Interpretation of this Marriage, as might be prov'd by Passages out of them, if I had room here to cite them. But I must observe here, that according to the Fathers, the Story of this Marriage is but another Emblem of the Marriage of the Lamb with the Bride of the *New Jerusalem*, spoken of in the *Revelations*, to which all the Fowls of the Air will be invited, that is, spiritual and heavenly minded Christians, who (49) soar and fly aloft in their divine and sublime Contemplations on the anagogical Sense of the Scriptures, which will exhibit those intellectual Dainties, they are there to be entertain'd with.

What I have here said out of the Fathers to the Story of this Marriage, is enough to quicken our *Divines* to search for the like mystical Interpretation of the whole. The Part of it that's most

(49) Volucres Cœli sunt verè puri & ad cœlestis sapientiæ Cognitionem evolare parati. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* L. iv.

difficult to be spiritually expounded, is that saying of *Jesus* to his Mother, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* For the clear Interpretation of which, I own, I meet with little in the Fathers. But St. *Augustin* (50) assures us, there's latent *Mystery* in the words. How then shall we come at it? Why, if we cast away the *Interrogation*, and look upon the Sentence, as elliptical, like an infinite number of prophetical ones, the Sense paraphrastically, and agreeably to the rest of the *Mystery*, arises thus: In answer to the Woman of the Church's Expectation of the Wine of the Spirit; *Jesus* will tell her or make her to understand of what importance it is to her (and himself) to be supply'd with that mystical Wine to her Edification, which it was not his time to pour forth upon the Church, till the Celebration of his Nuptials with her.

And thus have I done with the Miracle of *Jesus's* turning Water into Wine at a Marriage of *Cana* of *Galilee*. Whether it be not an absurd and offensive Story according to the Letter, let any

(50) Quid mihi & tibi est, Mulier? Procul dubio, Fratres, latet ibi aliquid Mysteriorum. In Loc. *Johan.*

one judge. If the supposed Jewish *Rabbi* has forced a worse Sense upon it, than it will naturally bear, our *Clergy* may expostulate with him for it, which they hardly will any otherwise than by Exclamations against him, without Reason and Authority. But in the mystical Operation of this Miracle at the Marriage of Christ with his Church, there will be the Wisdom and Power and Goodness of God visible. And it will be a demonstration of *Jesus's Messiahship*, in as much as the Water of the Letter of the Law and the Prophets can't be turn'd into the Wine of spiritual Interpretations, but we must discern how he is the Accomplisher and Fulfiller of them. And so I pass to an

II. *Eleventh* Miracle of *Jesus*, viz. (51) That of his healing a Paralytick, for whom the Roof of the House was broken up to let him down into the Room where *Jesus* was.

And this Story (without excepting that of the Pool of *Bethesda*) is the most monstrously absurd, improbable and incredible of any according to the Letter. There is not one Miracle of *Jesus* specifically related, that does not labour un-

der more or less Absurdities, either in Substance or Circumstance : But this, for number and greatness of Absurdities, I think surpasses them all : And the Absurdities of it too are so obvious and stare a Man in the Face, that I wonder they are hitherto overlook'd, and that considerate and intelligent Persons have not before now hesitated and boggled at them. If Interest had not blinded the Eyes of our learned *Clergy*, they would easily have descry'd the Incredibilities and Absurdities of this Story ; and in another *Impostor's* Case presently have pointed them out to the ridicule of his Admirers and Adorers.

If a Man was to torture his Brains for the Invention of a romantick Tale of improbable and surprizing Circumstances, that he might, withal, hope to palm for a Truth, if it was but for a Week or a Day, upon the Faith and Understanding of the Credulous ; he could never have presumed, I think, so far upon the weakness of their Intellects, as to imagine any thing so grossly and notoriously contradictory to Sense and Reason, would have gone down with them, as is *this* before us, which has pass'd currently thro' many Ages of the Church, has been read with attention by the Learned, and re-

vered

vered by the rest of Christians, without any exception, hesitation, or doubt of the Truth of it. In short, so palpable is the falsity of the Story of this Miracle, that it requires no Sagacity to detect it; and was it not for the sake of the Mystery more than to expose the Folly of the *Clergy* in believing of it, I had never bestow'd the following Pains on it.

The People, it seems, so press'd and throng'd about the Door of the House, where *Jesus* was, that the Paralytick and his Bearers could not get near it. What did they so throng and press for? Was it to see *Jesus*, who was *without Form and Comeliness*, according to the Prophet *Isaiab*; or, who was one of the most graceful of the Sons of Men, as *Painters* and *Publius Lentulus* do describe him? This could not be the Reason of the Croud. Tho a Person extraordinary, either for Beauty or Deformity may attract the Eyes of the People, and occasion too a Throng about him; yet this could be no Reason for a *Press* about *Jesus*, at *Capernaum*, where he dwelt, and was commonly seen and well known.

Was it then to hear him preach? Nor this neither. Tho an excellent Preacher does sometimes, and a very indifferent one does oftener draw multitudes

tudes after him; yet *Jesus*, as a Prophet, was without Honour at *Capernaum*, his own Country; consequently, it is not to be supposed that, for his Doctrine, he was so much follow'd here, tho we read, that he *preach'd the Word unto them*.

Was it then to behold him working of Miracles and curing of the diseased? This is the likeliest Reason of the Crouds and Throng about him. And perhaps it was a Day appointed beforehand for his healing of the diseased, which might occasion a more than ordinary Concourse of the People. But then this Reason would have induced the People to make way for the *Lame, Blind, and Paralyticks* to come to *Jesus*; or they frustrated their own Hopes and Expectations of seeing Miracles wrought; and acted more unreasonably than ever Mob did, or can be supposed to do.

But whatever was the Reason of this tumultuous Crouding, which is hard to be accounted for; it's said, the poor *Paralytick* with his Bearers could not get to the Door of the House for the *Press*, and therefore in all haste is he haul'd to the Top of the House, and let down, thro' a breach of the Roof, into the Room where *Jesus* was. What need
was

was there of such haste and pains to get to *Jesus* for a Cure? It was but waiting a while, not many Hours, and in all probability the Tumult would be appeas'd, and access easily had to him. But that the Bearers of the poor Man should enterprize a trouble and difficulty, that could not require less Time, than the Tumult could be supposed to last, is a little strange and somewhat incredible.

St. *Chrysostom* says (52), that the *Paralytick* saw that the Market-place or Street was throng'd with People, who had obstructed all Passage to the House, where *Jesus* was; and yet he did not so much as say to his Friends and Bearers, "What's the Reason of this Tumult? Let's stay till it is appeas'd, and the House clear'd of the People, who ere long will depart; and then we shall privately and quietly get admittance to *Jesus*," But why did he not say so? Any one beside himself and his Bearers, if they had any Reason and

(52) *Paralyticus repletum videret Theatrum, Aditus interclusos, Portum obseptum, — Non tamen dixit Propinquis suis, quid hoc Rei est? Expectemus, quousque Domus evacuetur, Theatrum dimittatur, recedent, qui congregati sunt, poterimus privatim ad illum accedere. In Homil. de hoc Paralyt.*

Senses about them, would have so argued. St. *Chrysostom* says, it was their *Faith* that made them in such haste to get to *Jesus*: But I should have thought their *Faith* might have work'd *Patience*, and disposed them to stay till *Jesus* could come out to them, or they get in to him: And it is an Addition to the strangeness and incredibility of the Story, that it did not.

But supposing this *Paralytick* in such haste and danger of Life, that he could not wait the dispersion of the Tumult, but, for want of a free entrance at the Door, is, cost what it will, to be rais'd to the top of the House, and a breach must be there made for him. The Question is, whether such an Enterprize was or could be feasible and practicable? I have no Conception of the possibility of it. If they could not get to the Door of the House for the Prefs; of consequence they could not come at the Sides of it. How should they? over the Heads of the People? That's not to be imagined; consequently *her*'s another difficulty in the Story, that renders it yet more strange and incredible.

But, without questioning the possibility and easiness of getting the *Paralytick* and his Couch over the Heads of the

the

the Mob, to the sides of the House ; thither he is brought, where we now behold him and his Bearers with their Pullies, Ropes, and Ladders (that were not at hand, nor could suddenly be procured) hauling and heaving him to the top of the House. Of what height the House was, is not of much Consequence. Some for the Credit of the Story may say (53), it was a *very low one* ; tho antient and modern *Commentators* are pretty well agreed, that it was an *upper-Room*, where *Jesus* was ; consequently the House was at least two Stories high : But if it was much higher, I'll allow that Art and Pullies (which they wanted for the present) would raise the Man and his Bed to the top of it : So we will not dispute nor differ upon that matter. On the top of the House then, we are now to behold the *Paralytick* and his Bearers with their Hatchets and Hammers, &c. (which they forgot to bring with them, for they could not think of any use they should have of them) uncovering the Roof of the House ; breaking up *Tiles*, *Spars*, and *Rafters*, and making a Hole, capacious enough for the Man and

(53) Dicet aliquis valde dimissum fuisse Locum, à quo per Tegulas deposuerunt Paralytici Lectum. *Johan. Nepot. Hieros. in Loc. Luc.*

his Bed to be let thro'. An odd, strange, and unaccountable Work *this*, which, if they had not been cunning Fellows, would hardly have enter'd into their Heads to project. But at work they are, when it was well, if Jesus and his Disciples escaped with only a broken Pate, by the falling of Tiles, &c, and if the rest were not almost smother'd with the Dust; for it was over their Heads that the breach was made. Where was the good Man of the House all this while? Would he suffer his House to be thus broken up, and not command them to desist from their foolish and needless Attempt, till the Mob was quell'd, and there was a free entrance at the Door of his House, which could not be long first? Is there nothing in all this, of difficulty and obstruction in the way of the belief of this Story?

Some modern *Commentators*, being aware of these difficulties in this Story, and willing to reconcile Men to the easier belief of it, say, as *Drusius* (54) did, that the Houses of *Judæa* were *flat-roof'd*, and not *ridg'd*: And Doctors, *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* (55) say, there was

(54) *Judæorum Tecta plana erant, & non in Coni formam fastigiata. In Loc. Luc.*

(55) *In Loc. Marci.*

a Door on their flat Roofs, by which the *Jews* used to ascend to the top of their Houses, where they discours'd on the Law and religious Matters; and that it was thro' such a Door, by a little widening of the sides of it, that the *Paralytick* was let down in the presence of *Jesus*. To which Opinion I would yield, if it was not liable to these Objections, *viz.* that it is not reconcilable to what *St. Luke* says, of *their letting the Paralytick down thro' the Tiling with his Couch, in the midst, where Jesus was*; nor hardly consistent with what *St. Mark* says, of their *uncovering and breaking up the Roof of the House*: which Expressions the *Evangelist* had never used, if their had been a Door for him to descend by. But to indulge *Lightfoot* and *Whitby* in their Notion; I may ask them, what occasion was their then of widening the door-way, and breaking down the sides of it? They'll say, because the Passage otherwise was too narrow, for the Man's Couch to get thro'. Why then did not they take him out of his Couch and let him down in a Blanket, a Chair, or a Basket? Or rather, why did not *Jesus*, to prevent this Trouble and Damage to the House, ascend thro' this Door, to the Top of it, and there speak the healing

Word to this poor Man? To say, that *Jesus* could not or would not go up to the Paralytick, I would not, for Fear of an Imputation of Blasphemy against me. Our *Divines* therefore are to look for, what they'll hardly find, an Answer to the said Question, which will consist with the Wisdom, the Goodness and Honour of *Jesus*; or here will be another and insuperable Bar to the Credibility of this Story.

In short, there are more and greater Difficultys affecting the Credit of this Miracle, on the side of *Jesus*, than any before urg'd. Could not he, as it was antiently (56) objected, have made the Access to himself more easy? Could not he, to prevent all this Trouble and Pains of getting to the Top of the House; and of breaking up the Roof of it, have desired or even forc'd the People to make way for this poor Man and his Bearers? This was not impossible for him to do. If it was hard for another; it was not for him, who was omnipotent. He that could drive his Thousands before him out of the Temple; and draw as many after him into the wilderness, might surely, by Force or Per-

(56) Numquid enim facilem illi potuit Accessum red-
dere? Apud Chrysostom, de hoc Paralyt,

suasion have made the People, how unreasonably mobbish soever, to retreat. And why did he not? Without a good and satisfactory Answer, which I can't conceive, to this Question, here is the most unaccountable and incredible part of the whole Story, that reflects on the Wisdom, the Power and Goodness of *Jesus*. If there had been no other absurd Circumstances of it, this is enough to spoil its Credit, so far as that I believe it impossible for *Ministers* of the *Letter*, with all their Wit, Penetration and Sagacity to get over it.

Believe then the Story of this Miracle, thus taken to Pieces, who can? It is such an Accumulation of Absurdities, Improbabilities, and Incredibilities, that a Man of the most easy Faith, if he at all think, can't digest. Its not credible, I said, to suppose, the People of *Capernaum*, where *Jesus* dwelt, and was well known and little admired, would at all *press* to see or hear him: And if the occasion of their Concourse was to behold his Miracles; it is less reasonable to think they would tumultuate to their own disappointment; but rather make way for the diseased, for the satisfaction of their own Curiosity, to come to him: And if they did mob it to their own disappointment, about the
Door

Door of the House; it was next to impossible for the poor Man and his Couch to be heav'd over their Heads, and rais'd to the top of it: More unreasonable yet to think, the master of the House would suffer the Roof of it to be so broken up: But most of all against Reason to suppose, *Jesus* would not give forth the healing word, and prevent all this Labour, or by his divine Power disperse the People, that the *Paralytick* might have present and easy access to him.

Whether all this be not absolutely shocking of the Credit of this Story, let my Readers judge. In my Opinion, no Tale more monstrously romantick can be told. I don't here question *Jesus's* Power to heal this Paralytick, nor the miraculousness of the Cure of him: The trouble of that Question is saved me, by the many other incredible Circumstances of the Story, which are such a Contradiction to Sense and Reason, as is not to be equall'd, in any thing, that's commonly receiv'd and believ'd by Mankind. *Cicero* says, that there is nothing so absurd, which some of the Philosophers have not held. And they might and did, some of them, hold gross Absurdities. But the Letter of the Story of this Miracle before us, which is the Object of the Faith
of

of our learned Priesthood at this Day is a match for the worst of them.

But as absurd, as this Story is, I expect that our *Clergy* will be disgusted at my ludicrous display of it; and that Arch-Deacon *Stubbs* in particular will again be ready to exclaim against me, and say, that this is turning a *miraculous Fact*, and a *divine Testimony* of our Religion into Ridicule. Whereupon it is to be wish'd, *that Arch-Deacon* would write, what would be a Pleasure to see, a Vindication of this Story. If he can account for the possibility and credibility of the Letter of it, he shall have my leave to make another dull Speech in *Convocation* against me. And it is not unlikely, but he may say as much for it, as another Man: For as the Story is senseless, so it is the better suited to his Head and Brains. But if he don't, I much question, whether any other Clergyman of more Wit will, appear in Defence of it.

So absurd is the Letter of this Story, that for the Honour of *Jesus*, and Credibility of his Gospel, it is absolutely necessary to turn it into Allegory. To the Fathers then, let us go for their help in this Case. If they did not read me a better Lecture upon this Miracle, than do our modern

modern *Commentators*, I should be almost tempted to renounce my Religion upon it : But as they have rationally and rightly instructed me in its true meaning, so I retain my Christian Faith, and admire the Sublimity of the Mystery, which I am now to give an account of.

By this *Paralytick*, *St. Hilary* (57) says, is to be understood *Mankind* of all Nations, which opinion too the Fathers held of the *Paralytick*, who was heal'd at the Pool of *Bethesda*. And by his Palsy is not meant any bodily Distemper, but the spiritual Palsy of the Soul, that is, as *St. Augustin* (58) and *St. Jerome* (59) interpret, a dissoluteness of Morals, and an unsteadiness of Faith and Principles, which is the Condition of Mankind at present, who wants *Jesus's* help for the Cure of it. *Eusebius Gallicanus* (60) says, our Saviour's words signify,

(57) In Paralytico Gentium universitas offertur mendenda. *In Loc. Matt.*

(58) Paralyticus potest intelligi Anima dissoluta Membris, id est, bonis operibus. *Inter. Quæst. Evang.*

(59) Paralysis Typus est Torporis, quo piger jacet in Malitia Carnis, habens desiderium Salutis, & Torporis Ignavia & duplis Cogitationibus, ac si enervatus Membris ostendit. *In Loc. Marci.*

(60) In hoc enim quod ait, remittuntur tibi Peccata, interiorem hominem, id est, spiritum paralyticum esse demonstrat. Hoc enim non dixisset, si ad Corporis Infirmitatem respexisset. Non ideo Corpus sanatur, quia Anima à peccatis liberatur. *In Homil. in Dominic. xix. post Pentecost.*

that

that it is not a bodily but a spiritual Disease here meant; or he had never said to the Paralytick, *Son, thy Sins are forgiven thee*, which words respect the inward Man, and demonstrate the Palsy here to be a disease of the Soul.

The Man sick of the Palsy had *four Bearers*. And who are they mystically in this Case? Why, the Fathers (61) understand by them the *four Evangelists*, on whose Faith and Doctrine Mankind is to be carry'd unto Christ; for no Soul can be brought unto him, for the Sanation of his Sins and Errors, but by these *four*.

But to the top of the House is Mankind, thus paralytically diseased, to be carry'd by the four Evangelists, his Bearers. And what then is this House and its Top? The House of *Jesus* is the intellectual Edifice of the World, otherwise call'd Wisdom's House, of the beautiful Buildings of which the Scriptures prophetically

(61) Sed qui sunt isti quatuor, qui hunc Paralyticum portant & Domino offerunt. Per hos enim nescio, qui melius quam quatuor Evangelistæ intelligi possunt. Nulla enim Anima nisi per istos Domino offertur, nulla Anima nisi per istorum fidem sanatur. *Euseb. Gallican. ibid.* Sum Paralyticus, quia non operantur & immobiles sunt Vires Animæ meæ ad bonum, sed si a quatuor Evangelistis gestatus & adductus fuero ad Dominum, tunc audiam, remittuntur Peccata. *Theophylact. in Lcc. Marci.*

treat: therefore to the *sublime Sense* of the Scriptures, call'd the Top (62) of the House, is a Man to be taken: He is not to abide in the *low and literal Sense* (63) of them, where People *press* and strive in vain to come to *Jesus*. But if he is taken to the Sublimity of the Scriptures and there *open* (64) *the House* of Wisdom, he will presently be admitted to the Presence and Knowledge of *Jesus*.

Venerable *Bede*, who is altogether a Transcriber of the Fathers, for which Reason I cite him among the Fathers, says (65), that by the *Tiles* of the House

(62) *Testum Domus qua Christus docet, ascendendum, id est, Sacrae Scripturae Sublimitas est appetenda. Bedæ in Loc. Lucæ.*

(63) *Non utique in Infimis exterius, qua turbæ tumultuantur remanendum, sed Testum Domus, &c. Ibid.*

(64) *Patefacto Teste ager ad Jesum summittitur, quia referatis Scripturarum Mysteriis, ad Notitiam Christi pervenitur. Bedæ in Loc. Marci. Est Paralysis interior, ut pervenias ad Christum forte enim latet Medicus & intus est, hoc est, iste verus Intellectus in Scripturis occultus est) exponendo quod occultum est aperi Testum, & depone Paralyticum. Augustin. In Serm. XLVI. Sest. 13. Impediri turbis nisi Teste id est operta Scripturarum aperiat, ut per hæc ad Notitiam Christi perveniat. Eiusdem in Quæst. 41a in Evangel. Lucæ.*

(65) *Et bene Domus Jesu juxta alterius Evangelistæ Narrationem tegulis esse contexta reperitur, quia sub contemptibili Literarum Velamine, si adsit, qui referet, divina spiritualis Gratia Virtus invenietur. Denudatio etenim Tegularum in Domo Jesu, Apertio est, in utilitate Literæ, sensus spiritualis & arcanorum cœlestium. In Loc. Marci.*

spoken of in *St. Luke*, is meant the *Letter* of the Scriptures, which is to be laid open for the manifestation of Christ and of divine Mysteries to the healing of Man's spiritual Palsy, the unsteadiness and dissoluteness of his Morals and Principles.

So much, in short, then to the mystical Interpretation of the Story of this Miracle. The literal Sense of it is so encumber'd with romantick Circumstances, as are enough to turn a Man's Heart against Christianity it self: But in the Mystery there will be a most stupendous Miracle, which will be not only an Argument of *Jesus's* divine Power, but of his *Messiahship*, as certainly as his House of Wisdom, of which the Scriptures write, is open'd to the Manifestation of his Presence, and to the Cure of Mankind of his paralytical Disease, call'd an instability of Faith and Principles.

And thus have I, in this *Discourse*, taken into Examination three more of *Jesus's* Miracles; which I submit to the Judgment of my Readers, whether the literal Story of them does not consist of Absurdities, Improbabilities and Incredibilities according to the Proposition before us; and whether there is not a necessity, for the Honour of *Jesus*, to

turn them into prophetic and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously and more wonderfully done by him.

My next *Discourse*, if my mind hold, shall treat on the three Stories of *Jesus's* raising of the dead, *viz.* of the Widow of *Naim's* Son, of *Jairus's* Daughter, and of *Lazarus*; after which I will give the literal History of Christ's Resurrection, that sandy Foundation of the Church, a Review; and so conclude my Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour.

To run thro' all the Miracles of *Jesus*, and handle them in the manner I have done the foregoing, would be a long and tedious Work. But if our *Divines* shall think, I have selected only those Miracles, which are obnoxious to Cavil and Ridicule; and have omitted others, that literally are a more unexceptionable Testimony of *Jesus's* divine Power, and Authority; I will, for their Satisfaction take more of them to Task, and give the Letter of their Stories, the like ludicrous treatment. If I mistake not, the Miracles already spoken to, together with those of *Jesus's* raising of the dead, and of his own Resurrection, are the most famous and remarkable of any others: And according to the Observation I have made

made on the rest, they are no less but rather more liable to Ridicule and Exception. But if any are of a contrary Opinion, and will let me know, which in their Judgment are more unexceptionable Miracles, I will vouchsafe them an Examination. I am sure there is not one Miracle, which the Fathers of the Church did not turn into Allegory; and if we don't at this Day make mystical Operations of them, they will none of them according to the Letter, stand their Ground, nor abide the Test of a critical Inquiry into them.

I don't expect, that this *Discourse* will be any more pleasing and acceptable to the *Clergy*, who are *Ministers* of the *Letter* of *Jesus's* Miracles, as well as of the Prophecies of him, than any of my former: But their Displeasure in the Case will give me no Disturbance, nor am I concern'd about any Resentment, they can make of it. If they are offended at these *Discourses*, they should as they came forth, have written solid Confutations of them, and so have prevented my Publication of any more of this kind: But instead of serious and potent Reasonings against me, I have met with little else but oral Railings, Exclamations, Defamations, and attempts for Prosecution; which

which have been so far from terrifying me, that they give me a secret Pleasure, and animate me to proceed in the Undertaking in Hand.

I did not much question but the *Bishop* of *St. Davids*, whom I look'd upon as a Person of Ingenuity and Learning, would before this Time, have publish'd somewhat in Confutation of one or other of my former *Discourses*. Whether he was not obliged to it, or to make me some publick Reparation of the Injury done to my Reputation, by his slanderous Sermon, I appeal now to the worshipful *Societys* for Reformation of Manners; to whom, and to other Civil Magistrates, I hope his Sermon, without Reason, will be a Caution, that no Pulpit-Invective move them to prosecute or think the worse of any Author.

Liberty of thinking, writing and judging for our selves in Religion is a natural, a Christian, and a protestant *Right*. It is a *Right* that the Magistrates as well as the Subject are interested in, and are to see to the Conservation of, or their Understandings as well as their Purfes will be ridden and oppress'd by an ignorant and tyrannical Priesthood. I urge not this for my own security against Prosecution for Infidelity and Blasphemy, declaring
that

that if the *Bishops of London*, *St. Davids*, or *Arch-Deacon Stubbs*, who are zealous for Persecution, will but engage me on the Stage of Controversy, and make good their Accusations against me, I will submit to the worst Punishment, that can be inflicted on the worst Offender.

In the mean time I will go on with my Undertaking, to the advancement of Truth, and demonstration of the *Messiahship* of the Holy *Jesus*, to whom be Glory for ever, *Amen*.

F I N I S.

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